



No 5573. 1/4

335.3



GIVEN BY





\* 5593. 127

341

# HELPING DELINQUENT CHILDREN

*These pamphlets prepared by  
the Special Juvenile Delinquency Project  
for the Children's Bureau*

**OTHER PAMPHLETS IN THIS SERIES**

**1. SOME FACTS ABOUT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

Brief statement of facts about the increase of juvenile delinquency in the Nation and about the inadequacy of the services available to help delinquent children become responsible citizens. Price: 10 cents.

**2. WHAT'S HAPPENING TO DELINQUENT CHILDREN IN YOUR TOWN?**

A guide, made up of series of questions, that will help citizen groups secure the facts about existing services for delinquent children in their own communities and States. Price: 15 cents.

(The above two pamphlets are available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C., at the prices indicated. A discount of 25 percent is allowed for orders of 100 or more copies. Payment must be made in advance.)

**3. RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR SERVICES FOR DELINQUENT CHILDREN**

A document intended for the use of professional workers and experts in the delinquency field that brings together standards of organization and practice for certain agencies and institutions that serve delinquent children. These statements were taken from the publications of numerous national organizations.

(The above document is available from the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington 25, D. C., without charge.)

# HELPING DELINQUENT CHILDREN

## CONTENTS

TOO MANY DELINQUENT CHILDREN, 5

TREATMENT OF DELINQUENT CHILDREN, 10

The Police, 12

Detention Home, 16

Juvenile Court, 20

Training School, 27

PREVENTING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, 35

ORGANIZING OUR SERVICES TO TREAT AND PREVENT DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR, 41

A description of the kind of services that should be given by certain agencies that have a major responsibility for working with delinquent children, together with a discussion of some ways of preventing juvenile delinquency

**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
AND WELFARE**

Social Security Administration  
Children's Bureau : 1953



# **TOO MANY DELINQUENT CHILDREN**

Every day that passes thousands of American boys and girls are picked up by our local police officers because of misbehavior.

They may steal something—from somebody's home, perhaps, or from a store.

They may destroy property—perhaps they are caught breaking street lights or the windows in a school building.

They may run away from home.

Or they may simply be found in surroundings where they *might* get in trouble—boys hanging around “joints” that have bad reputations, for instance, or girls around bars and other public places.

Of course, all boys and girls misbehave occasionally. In the case of many of these young people picked up by the police, however, their misbehavior goes further than we can safely tolerate. It may be dangerous, both to others and to themselves.

Some of these boys and girls cause tremendous property damage and commit acts of great violence and brutality. According to the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, which are based on fingerprint arrest record cards sent in by chiefs of police in various parts of the country, children under 18 committed 1 out of every 4 auto thefts and 1 out of 5 burglaries in the year 1951.

Three percent of the homicide cases reported during 1951 involved juveniles, and 2 percent of the assault cases.

It may shock us to think that 16- and 17-year-olds are capable of robbery, assault, rape, and murder. But these types of delinquency among young people are all too frequent.

And they are growing more common. The FBI reports show that in 1951 auto thefts by juveniles were up by more than half from 1948. Robbery was up 25 percent; burglary 15 percent; and assault 10 percent.

Juvenile delinquency is fast becoming America's No. 1 social problem!

### *Delinquency increasing rapidly*

At the present time the number of young people apprehended by the police for delinquent behavior is increasing at an alarming rate.

The current rise began with the "cold war." It has received a big boost from the Korean War.

In the 3-year period from 1948 to 1951 the number of children appearing before juvenile courts reporting to the Children's Bureau increased a total of 17 percent.

In that same period the number of boys and girls in this age group from 10 to 17 increased only 5 percent. In other words, juvenile delinquency is increasing at a faster rate than the child population.

Surprisingly enough, the less densely populated areas of the country seem to be experiencing even sharper increases than this 17 percent average. Courts serving jurisdictions of less than 100,000 persons showed an average increase of 29 percent—and a number of these "small" courts had increases in excess of 50 percent!

This sudden increase in both the rate and volume of delinquency reminds us of World War II, when all-time records in juvenile misbehavior were established. The world was turned upside down then. Many families were separated. Fathers were away in the armed forces. Mothers on war jobs were sometimes unable to give their children proper care. Young boys and girls roamed the streets to all hours of the night. Home life suffered.

The present international situation seems to be having a similar effect. People feel anxious about the future. Home and community life have been greatly altered by the change in pace brought on by accelerated defense activities.

In this atmosphere of sudden change and a doubtful future, many parents have not been able to give their children the steady care and supervision necessary for normal social development. Children need a stable home life. Without it they can easily become delinquent.

### *Further increases in sight*

The near future may bring us further increases in juvenile delinquency. The danger during the next few years can come from two sources.

First, the international situation may keep the Nation in an unsettled state for some time. This might well mean that the present rate of increase in the number of delinquent children will continue. If so, it could easily carry us beyond the peaks reached during World War II.

Second, there will be *more* children who could possibly become delinquent. The babies born during and after World War II are growing up. The Bureau of the Census predicts that by 1960 there will be 42 percent more children between the ages of 10 and 17 than there were in 1951.

Right now it is estimated that the police come in contact with about *a million boys and girls each year* on charges of delinquency.

So, even if the rate of delinquency doesn't go up any further, we still have good reason to fear that by 1960 there will be somewhere in the neighborhood of *a million and a half* boys and girls getting in trouble with the law each year because of their antisocial behavior.

#### *Too little help available for these children*

The prospect for the future is doubly alarming when we realize that we haven't been doing too good a job with our present delinquents.

Many of the children picked up by the police are familiar faces to them. Their behavior has not improved any since the last time they were apprehended. Hundreds of other children just on the verge of trouble are known to the police. But the police can't do very much about them. There are too many new cases to occupy their attention.

Many of the boys and girls who come before our juvenile courts have been there before. For lack of sufficient and trained personnel, the court has not been able to provide treatment that would really help them.

Many of the boys and girls who are released from our training schools are sent right back to them after only a few months of "freedom." They fail to adjust in the outside world and get in trouble again because of antisocial behavior.

We can't blame the training schools. They are supposed to be treatment centers that will rehabilitate all the boys and girls sent to them so that these young people *will* be able to adjust when they go back to their home communities. But the truth is that few of these training schools have sufficient and varied personnel to give individualized treatment to all the children they serve. And in few communities are there



services that can give the help a child needs in getting back to normal life after his release from the training school. In some cases the schools are so shorthanded that they are little more than custodial centers—places where children can be kept out of the way. Is it any wonder that when these boys and girls eventually return home, they are not much better off than when they were taken away?

More than half the inmates of our prisons for adults were once juvenile delinquents. Given proper treatment when they were still young, those men and women might have become responsible citizens, able to carry their share in our social life. We cannot help but feel that society must have failed them. It's up to us not to let the same thing happen to the boys and girls of today who are getting in trouble.

## *How to solve this problem?*

This is a tremendous problem we face:

thousands of young people in need of help;

the almost certain prospect that their number will increase by half within this decade;

and the knowledge that the people who work with our delinquents have too big a job to handle already.

And we must keep in mind that it's primarily a *local* problem we're talking about. Though our figures are for the national scene, they really show what's going on in hundreds of towns and communities all over America. The situation is worse in some cities and States than in others, but everywhere it is difficult and disturbing.

So, what can we do about it?

The answer to this question is not a new one. In fact it is an old one—and perhaps the only one: Our only hope in this situation is to attempt by every means possible to *prevent* delinquency from rising, but at the same time be prepared to *treat* it whenever and wherever it occurs.

The fact that we have tried this plan before—without complete success—should not make us despair. This time we must make an extra effort—an effort guided by knowledge of *why* and *how* delinquent children are to be helped. Such knowledge will make it easier for us to support those agencies in our communities that treat these children. Full public understanding and support are necessary for the success of this plan.

# **TREATMENT OF DELINQUENT CHILDREN**

A number of communities have been working on their delinquency problem for many years. With them it's not a part-time job. They *keep* working at it because they know that nearly any child can become delinquent if the community fails to maintain services that will support family life and thus ensure the healthy development of its children.

These communities know that the best way to deal with juvenile delinquency is to *prevent* it.

No one will dispute with them on this. And later on in this pamphlet more consideration will be given to the importance and necessity of carrying on an unceasing program of prevention in every one of our communities. Prevention is an essential part of our plan to meet the threat of increasing delinquency.

But we have to face *first* things first. A lot of boys and girls in our communities have *already* gotten into trouble with the law. The only kind of prevention we can accomplish with these youngsters is to *prevent their going on to further misbehavior*.

These young people need the kind of professional treatment that will help them to understand and work out their differences with the world around them—and teach them to live in that world as peaceful, law-abiding citizens.

The question thus arises: How are we going to give a possible million and a half boys and girls the treatment they require when the agencies presently entrusted with the major responsibility for determining this treatment—the police, juvenile court, detention home, and training school—are already having a hard time with their present caseloads?

The answer is fairly evident: We must strengthen these agencies. We must give them the tools necessary for the job that we ask them to do.

These agencies deserve our confidence. In spite of the handicaps and limitations they constantly face, they are often successful in treatment. But we cannot expect them to do the job demanded of them without greatly increased support.

## ***Trained staff plus good equipment***

Although each of these four agencies does a different job in the program for delinquent children, they all have certain common needs and they all have a common purpose.

The greatest single need is probably that for more and better-trained personnel. And the second most important need is that for good equipment and adequate physical quarters. The common purpose is to help the child "un-make" the pattern of behavior that brought him into conflict with the law.

"Un-making" delinquency can be a complicated process—as complex as the way in which the delinquency came about. Treatment must be based on a child's individual needs. One child may simply need to be brought into a baseball club in his neighborhood or have someone show an interest in his school work. Another child may be so deeply involved in a personality conflict with his family and his home environment that only a period of long and arduous individual treatment will help him make social and personal adjustment.

No attempt will be made here to tell *how* that treatment should be carried out in the case of individual children. Treatment is the job of the staff of the agencies mentioned and of the experts—the social workers, educators, psychologists, and psychiatrists—who work with them.

What will be explained here, then, is the reason why a staff must be trained, why good equipment is essential, and why expert counsel must be available—if treatment for delinquents is to be more successful than it is at present. Of course, it is understood that not every community can provide a full team of top-flight experts. There aren't enough psychiatrists to go around, for example. But this does not lessen the importance of the fact that whatever help we can secure should be *trained* help—trained for the specific job of working with these delinquent children. In time, perhaps, there will be enough psychiatrists to go around.

Let's take a look at each of the four agencies mentioned as having a major responsibility in determining the treatment of delinquent children—the police, juvenile court, detention home, and training school—and see how these needs for trained personnel and equipment apply.

## THE POLICE

Most children charged with delinquency are apprehended by the police. A few are brought in to the police or to the juvenile court by angry or distraught parents, by relatives, or neighbors. Some are referred to the court by schools, churches, recreation leaders, social agencies, and the like. But the major portion—about a million a year—have their first contact with legal authority in the person of the policeman.

This is obviously an important meeting. It can leave a lasting impression on the child, particularly if it is his first meeting with the law. If he is intimidated and frightened, he is not apt to respond very openly and willingly to efforts to help him. On the contrary, he will probably become defiant and rebellious or withdrawn and unreachable.

Here, then, is a real necessity for training. The police officer who apprehends a child must know how to work with that child. He must know how to dispel his fears and put him at his ease, so that he will be cooperative and responsive.



A widely used manual for the guidance of police officers who deal with child offenders makes these recommendations:

### DO THIS

- (1) *Treat the juvenile with consideration.* Remember that what he thinks of you and your conduct may influence his future attitude to be in favor of, or opposed to, social and legal requirements.
- (2) *Be friendly.* Many juveniles feel that the world is against them. Do not let your conduct further the development of an antisocial attitude in the child. Many juveniles are discouraged. They believe they are failures, though they haven't had time to be. You wouldn't expect a half-completed airplane to fly. You can't expect an undeveloped child to function as an adult.
- (3) *Be firm.* Appeal to his intelligence, his reason, his sense of fairness.
- (4) *Discover the child's problems, if you can.* His problems are as important to him as yours are to you. If you know his problems, you may be able to help him.
- (5) *Try to gain his confidence and respect.* In attempting to determine the child's guilt or innocence with respect to any overt act, your chances are far better if he believes in you.
- (6) *Remember that the child of today is the man of tomorrow.* A boy who hates a police officer because of the officer's abusive attitude will, as a man, have little respect for him.
- (7) *Be positive in your attitude.* Show the benefits that come from an attitude of conformity with lawful requirements rather than dwelling on the harmful effects of antisocial behavior.

### DON'T DO THIS

- (1) *Don't resort to vulgarity, profanity or obscenity.* The use of such language by a police officer is especially reprehensible and should not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- (2) *Don't "brand" the juvenile.* Epithets such as "thief," "liar," "burglar," or not; nor should such terms be used in reference to juveniles in their "forger," etc., should never be used towards juveniles whether in custody presence or in the presence of their parents or relatives, or of any other person not a member of the police department—nothing is to be gained by it, and there is definite indication that it is very injurious to the child. Such epithets give rise to justified complaints. They are rightfully resented by the parents. The use of such epithets toward juveniles is a reflection upon the character and intelligence of the officer using them.
- (3) *Don't lose your temper.* To do so is an admission of mental inferiority to the person being interrogated.

### *Police act independently in many cases*

How to conduct himself with a child apprehended for delinquency is only the first step in the training needed by a policeman.

An obviously important task he performs is to decide whether or not a boy or girl should be brought before the juvenile court. This is a crucial decision. The officer must act in a way that will give full protection to the community and at the same time be to the benefit of the child as far as possible. If a child has committed a serious offense, the officer will ordinarily take him to juvenile court without question. However, if the offense is a minor one, he may decide that the services of the juvenile court are not required to meet the child's needs. A police officer must make such a decision every time he apprehends a child for delinquent behavior.

The police do handle many cases themselves—in fact, the majority. In 1951, it is estimated that the police disposed of 750,000 cases and referred 250,000 cases to juvenile courts.

In these cases dealt with directly by the police, the need for training is particularly important. Faced with minor delinquent behavior on the part of a boy or girl, the policeman must decide on a course of action: Should the child simply be reprimanded and allowed to go his way? Should the parents be informed? Perhaps the child should be referred to a clinic, to a social agency, or to a recreation group?

In making his decision, not only must the police officer be a shrewd judge of character but also he must *know his community*—particularly the social agencies, recreation groups, and clinics that are available, and more specifically, what they do. A police officer evidently cannot properly exercise the broad discretion given him without suitable training.

### *Police training for prevention*

Knowledge of the community can also help a policeman *prevent* delinquency.

The police should be more familiar than any other organized group with community conditions that might endanger the safety of young people. Through regular patrol and supervision of potentially harmful spots, such as parks, bus stations, dance halls, skating rinks, motion-

picture houses, hotels, night clubs, restaurants, and taverns, the police can help check promiscuous activities and protect young people from immoralizing influences.

In the course of their inspection the police may find young people working in undesirable places at too early an age, too late at night, and/or too long hours. By reporting violation of child labor and liquor control laws to State officials and cooperating with them in the enforcement of these laws, the police can also help to protect young persons from being exploited for commercial gain.

#### *Juvenile divisions and juvenile aid officers*

A number of communities have established a special unit for the handling of delinquent children within their police departments. Usually there are both policemen and policewomen assigned to this unit.

In a few cities these divisions or units are composed of specially trained men and women. They work only with juveniles. Their job is to prevent delinquency as well as to deal with the boy or girl who has already become delinquent.

Unfortunately, only a few communities have given full attention to this need for trained police personnel to work with delinquent children. Every city with a population of 25,000 people or more *should have* a juvenile division in the police department. Smaller communities should have one or more officers trained to work with these children. And, of course, all officers should have some knowledge of the problems of delinquency control.

An increased demand by communities for trained juvenile aid police officers will undoubtedly result in more courses for juvenile police work being offered by universities and police academies and schools.

At the present time the most comprehensive university-operated course in this work is offered by the Delinquency Control Institute of the University of Southern California. Unfortunately the number of students the Institute can accept for each session of the course is still very small.

A plan that might succeed in giving training to a large number of police officers in a very short time was recently proposed for use in one State. According to this plan, the State university would offer an extension course on juvenile police work, consisting of 16 sessions of one and a half hours each. It would be taught by people who have had experience with juvenile delinquents. The course would be given in

any community where the demand is sufficient and to as many police men as apply. As an added incentive, it was proposed that the State Civil Service Commission give credit for the course in civil service promotion examinations. Though each officer would be responsible for his own tuition, it was expected that many local police department or interested civic groups would pay the necessary expense. The plan is evidently one that many States could easily follow.

There is clearly an increased awareness on the part of police departments and citizen groups of the importance of special training for officers who work with juveniles. It is hoped that further means can be found to give police officers this training.

## DETENTION HOME

From time to time our law enforcement agencies—the police or the juvenile court—detain a child, that is, hold him away from his home.

This can be a very upsetting experience for a child. Even if his home is a bad one, he will usually feel more at ease there than among unfamiliar surroundings. Consequently, if a child is to be held away from his home, the place of detention should provide a constructive atmosphere. It should be a place where the child is helped to start on his way to readjustment.

The two great needs for detention, then, are that the physical quarters be good and that the persons who take care of the child during this period be trained for their job.

### *Reasons for detention*

A child may be held in detention for a number of reasons.

The delay itself—that is, the time lapse between apprehension and disposition—may result from any one of various circumstances: Perhaps the child was apprehended during the night. Or the court may be of the circuit type and will not be in session for several days. Or a preliminary hearing may have been held by the court but the judge defers final decision as to what should be done with the child until a later hearing. These are some of the reasons why there may

be a delay between the time a child is apprehended and the time disposition is made of his case.

Ordinarily during this period of delay the child is allowed to return home. He is as easily available to the court there as he would be anywhere else. And he's usually better off at home if his parents can be trusted to care for him.

However, not all children can be allowed to return to their parents. The homes of some of these children are places that are morally and physically unsafe for them. Their parents may be abusive or neglectful. Others of these children, if they were allowed to return home, might run away or do further harm. These children are generally beyond the control of their parents.

#### *Place of detention*

These two groups of children, therefore—those that simply need shelter and those that require secure custody—cannot be permitted to return temporarily to the care of their parents, as in the majority of instances, but must be detained in a place other than their homes.

Where should these children be detained? Obviously the need differs for each of the two groups. The child whose own home is not a fit place for him should have the attention and care he would receive in a proper home. The practice is therefore to place a child of this type in a suitable foster home or in an institution that offers foster care.

The other child—the one who might run away or commit a new offense—must be *securely held*. The place of detention in this child's case must offer safeguards against his running away or doing harm to himself or to others.

This need for secure custody for certain children has led to an unsound and damaging practice: *Children are being held in jail*.

The mere fact of detention alone is an alarming and unsettling experience for a child. Jail, then, is a double terror.

It is a sad fact that the majority of jails are scarcely fit for adult inmates. Less than one-fourth of the more than 3,000 city and county jails inspected by the Federal Bureau of Prisons have been found suitable for housing adult prisoners. And yet it is estimated that every year from 50,000 to 100,000 children are confined in these jails!

Here these children live in idleness. Here the lack of supervision may lead to their exploitation by older offenders. Here they may learn



the vices and embittered attitudes of adult criminals. To detain children in such places is to do them harm.

Most of our State governments have tried by law to encourage local communities to provide better detention facilities for delinquent children and to avoid the use of jails. A number of States have specifically forbidden the use of jails.

However, in many communities no other facility exists. Although there are more than 2,500 juvenile courts in the United States that could make use of the secure-custody type of detention facility, only 174 such detention homes are in operation.

Local police officers say that they have to keep delinquent children in jail because there is no other place for them. Many of these officers do feel great concern over the problem, and instances are known where a county sheriff has taken an unruly delinquent child into his own home rather than put him in jail with adult prisoners. But this can be no lasting solution.

One of the chief reasons why local governments are so slow about taking necessary action to correct this evil of poor detention is that in

many communities there are only a small number of delinquent children who have to be held in secure custody. It would therefore be economically impractical for these communities to construct and operate the type of detention facility required.

However, in most States this problem can be surmounted. The solution is to establish detention facilities on a regional basis. In some States, a central State agency has the responsibility for providing such facilities on this basis. In other States, two or more counties can get together voluntarily and establish and operate a detention home at a central spot convenient to the counties participating. In this way a small group of counties can together give their delinquent children the care they require, whereas singly they would not be able to do so.

Whatever the solution, we do have to find a way to keep children out of jail.

#### *What kind of detention?*

We still have to give some thought to the type of secure-custody facility needed and to what detention in general should be.

Ideally, the building in which children are held in secure custody should be especially designed for its purpose. It needs windows and doors that cannot be pried open and halls and rooms that permit easy supervision of children by the staff.

At the same time the place must not look like a prison. Rather, the security features should be concealed so that the general atmosphere is pleasant and sympathetic in tone. And, in addition, the staff should be particularly skilled in handling boys and girls with behavior problems. The program should keep the children constructively occupied.

In fact, detention should be a constructive experience for all the children who have to go through it. Instead of being a period of "cold storage" or of punishment, such as a child might go through in jail, the detention period should be one in which the delinquent can get his bearings—find out what's ahead of him and begin to understand that there are people who want to help him correct his mistakes rather than punish him for them.

The delinquent child who comes to detention usually needs both physical and emotional care. Quite often he needs a bath and may have to be clothed, fed, and given medical attention. His emotional needs require even greater attention.

If the child is being temporarily detained in a private foster home, warm affection and care offered by sympathetic foster parents can help to make up for the neglect he may have suffered in his own home. If the child is being held in the institutional-type detention home, a constructive program of specialized school work and of supervised recreational activity can be added to his daily program. In either case, an opportunity is afforded to give attention to the needs of the individual child and to start each child back on the way to normal, healthful development.

It is apparent that in both these situations—the foster home and the institution—the adults who work with delinquents must have a natural sympathy for children. In addition, they must be trained to help them with their particular problem at the moment—the terrible feeling of fear, anxiety, and defiance with which they face the future.

The help of experts is often needed in the work of a detention home staff. Not only do children generally need to receive treatment while they are in detention, but also clinical and social studies of the child have to be made for the juvenile court judge who must make the final decision as to what shall be done with the child.

Few detention homes are able singly to support a full clinical team, and generally there is no need for this. But these services should be at least made available somewhere in the community, so that detention homes, the juvenile court, and other agencies can draw upon them.

## JUVENILE COURT

An estimated 350,000 boys and girls a year come before our juvenile courts. These usually include the most serious cases of alleged delinquency. The police bring in about 250,000 of these cases each year. The remainder come to the court on the petition of parents, school officials, social workers, or other interested persons in the community.

The juvenile court judge has a heavy responsibility in dealing with these children. He must first decide if a boy or girl is delinquent in terms of the law. And if the child proves to be delinquent, the judge must then try to find out what made him delinquent—so that he can prescribe a plan of treatment that will help the boy or girl correct this inclination to behave in an antisocial way.

It is evident that a juvenile court judge cannot carry out all these duties without considerable training for his job and without a lot of help from a skilled staff and from other resources in the community.

Let's take a closer look at the skills and training needed in the work of the juvenile court. This is a key agency in the treatment program for delinquents.

### *Judicial function comes first*

The first decision a juvenile court judge has to make about the boy or girl who is brought before him on charges of delinquency is whether or not the child is really delinquent—that is, in terms of the State and local laws governing delinquent behavior.

A judge ordinarily has considerable latitude in this respect, for most of the laws provide that a child may be declared delinquent not only for violation of a State law or municipal ordinance but also for such general forms of misconduct as habitual disobedience, association with immoral persons, incorrigibility, waywardness, and so on. There is rarely trial by jury for delinquent children, and the hearings are not open to the general public as a common rule. The hearings are informal in manner.



And in determining whether the child really committed the alleged delinquent act, the judge may be guided simply by the preponderance of evidence, rather than by evidence beyond a reasonable doubt.

These broad provisions give the juvenile court the fullest opportunity possible to work in behalf of the children brought before it. The theory is that the juvenile court judge is to regard the child as a parent would—and to act to the benefit of the child as a parent should.

However, this leeway in our State laws for delinquent children makes it important that there be no abuse of the power entrusted to the juvenile court judge. The civil rights of children—and of their parents—must be protected. It is fit and proper that the court act in behalf of the child, but never at the expense of his civil rights. To ensure that there will be no abuse, *the judge of the juvenile court should be trained in the law.*

In most States the judges of the juvenile courts are trained in the law. In a number of States and communities, however, no specific training or education whatsoever is required of the juvenile court judge. In fact, there are localities known where the person who acts as judge of the juvenile court performs this duty incidental to his main job of supervising the maintenance of county roads.

Another possible weakness in some of our State systems is the practice of assigning jurisdiction in cases involving juveniles to the judges of other courts—criminal or civil—who may already be overburdened. These judges may have to sandwich in their sessions for juveniles whenever they can find the time. Under the pressure of other business, which is their main concern, they are apt to give insufficient attention to the needs of the children with whom they must deal.

The net result of these differences between theory and practice in our juvenile court system is that although we have given the judges of these courts broad and in some ways extraordinary power over the children who come before them, we have failed in many places to demand that the judges who wield this power have the qualifications and the time necessary to be able to make good use of this power. In other words, in some of our States we have taken away certain legal rights and safeguards of children in order to help them without making up for this fully by giving the promised benefits.

And this same failure of practice to measure up to theory is also reflected in the second function a juvenile court judge often has to fulfill—the treatment function.

### *Judge often determines treatment program*

Once a boy or girl has been declared "delinquent," a treatment plan must be worked out for the child. The customary practice in the majority of States is for the juvenile court judge to say what treatment plan will be followed. This, then, is the second major responsibility borne by most juvenile court judges.

The judge does not ordinarily concern himself with the details of treatment. It is true, in some communities experts who are part of the court structure carry on the treatment, but in many other communities, the judge will refer a child to a public or private agency that can give individualized treatment and that offers its services to the court. However, in any case, the judge does dictate the broad outline of the treatment plan: whether the delinquent boy or girl is allowed to remain at home or in the community, for example; whether this is to be with or without supervision; or whether the child must be sent away to an institution.

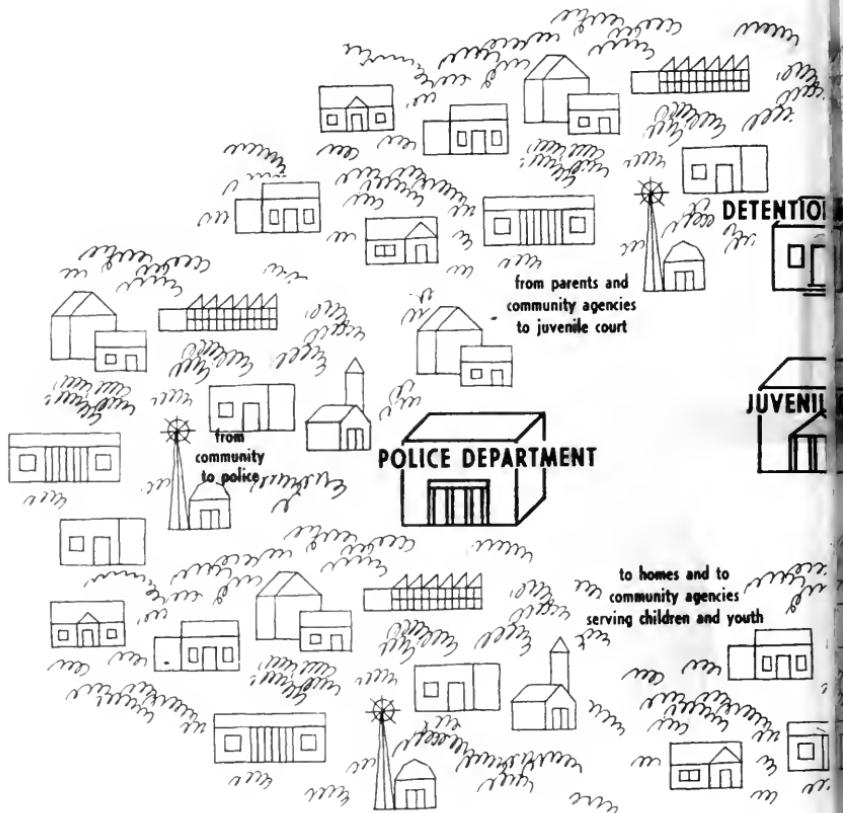
Of course the judge must have a considerable amount of information about the child to be able to decide on a good treatment plan for him. If he can find out about the child's background and the probable reason why the child became delinquent, he can do a much better job of determining what the child needs in the way of future treatment.

The information the judge needs to help him make this decision should normally include data on the child's home life, on his mental and physical condition, his school adjustment, and on his general social background. Quite often, the judge may feel that a child requires further study. In that case he may refer the boy or girl to a child guidance clinic for psychological testing or psychiatric study.

In view of the fact that in some of our communities the persons who judge our delinquent children do not even have legal training, it may seem too much to ask that the juvenile court judge should also have knowledge of the sciences of human behavior. Yet, when we consider that the decision of the juvenile court judge often influences the entire future course a young person's life may take, it seems but a slight requirement to make. Certainly the judge should have some understanding of the social and emotional forces that affect human behavior so greatly—particularly that of adolescents and children even younger.

A judge has a much lighter burden in this respect if he has a highly trained staff and if there are experts—psychologists and psychiatrists,

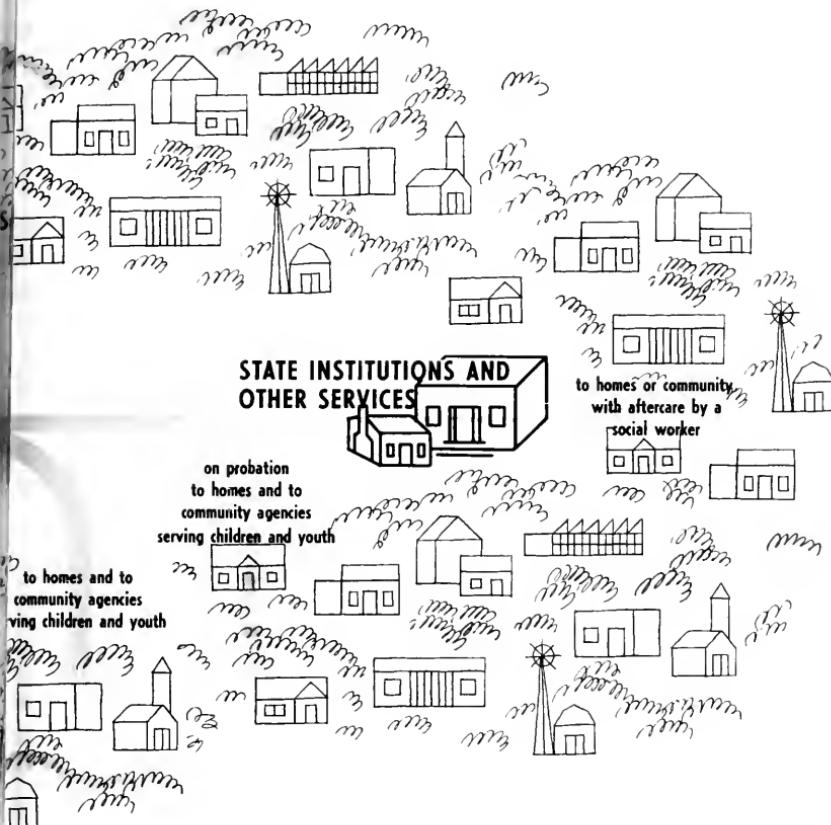
# Children in trouble with the law—where



for example—in the community upon whom he can call for counsel and assistance. The value of social resources in the community is apparent at every stage of the treatment program for delinquent children. These resources are particularly important in the diagnostic and treatment work of the juvenile court.

Whatever his own abilities, the judge must necessarily depend upon the probation workers who serve his court. These workers may be part of the court staff or they may belong to other agencies in the community. For example, in some places the public child welfare

# Where they come from and where they go



worker also serves the juvenile court as a probation officer. In any case, the court cannot very well function without probation service.

The probation worker has a twofold job. It is he, in the first instance, who investigates the child and gathers together the information needed by the judge to make a decision about treatment. A judge will often ask a skilled probation worker for his recommendation as to how the child should be handled.

The second job of the probation worker is to supervise those boys and girls who are allowed to remain in the community. The child

placed on probation is usually responsible to a particular worker. That worker should be a trained social worker. He should see the children assigned to him as often as necessary and he should give them as much individual attention and care as they may need in adjusting themselves. Sometimes a probation worker may also have to help the child's family solve certain of its problems.

Unfortunately, few probation officers have the time to give this kind of service. In fact, there are relatively few probation officers. More than half the counties in the United States are without probation service for juvenile delinquents. In those counties that do have such service, the workers often carry heavy caseloads that rarely permit them to give more than cursory attention to the needs of the individual child.

So far as probation service for the juvenile court is concerned, therefore, two needs are immediately apparent: (1) There should be a sufficient number of workers to meet the requirements of the court, and (2) those workers should possess the training that would permit them to be of maximum help to a child. They should be trained social workers, in other words. And they should be appointed to their office on the basis of merit, not of political affiliation.

*Effective treatment  
depends upon resources*

The importance of having treatment resources for the juvenile court cannot be emphasized too much. Where there are no such resources, we are brought again to that situation mentioned before—the situation of having taken away some of the legal rights of children in order to provide a better opportunity to help them, but then failing to supply the means to help them.

At the very least the court requires a good probation staff and necessary clinical facilities—and well-equipped quarters for them to work in. In addition, certain supplementary services are needed—those best provided by family and children's casework agencies, by mental health clinics, and by child guidance clinics. Schools, churches, and recreation associations also sometimes offer services that can be used to great advantage in the treatment program of the juvenile court.

Some of our communities have so few resources—if any—that many times the juvenile court judge has to dismiss cases against delinquent boys and girls because there is nothing better that can be done for them. Most judges are reluctant to send a boy or girl away from home to be

treated—particularly in those States where the training schools are not what they should be. The judge therefore takes the risk of releasing the child and hoping that some kind Fate will keep him out of further trouble.

In other words, no matter how earnestly a juvenile court judge may seek to help a delinquent child who could profit from good services, he is severely handicapped when the resources of the court and of the community are inadequate.

It is understandable that a juvenile court judge prefers to keep a delinquent child in his own home and in his own community whenever possible. These delinquents are still young. They need the stability and security of home life. Every community should do its best to help keep these children among familiar surroundings and offer them the treatment they require.

## TRAINING SCHOOL

As was said in the previous section, a juvenile court judge is usually reluctant to send a delinquent child away from his home and from familiar surroundings for treatment.

Some boys and girls can be dealt with in no other way, however. They may have proved by their conduct that they need closer supervision and greater attention to the basic cause of their misbehavior than they get at home or can get in a foster home. Or they may need the "give-and-take" of life with a large group. In these and similar cases the judge may well send a boy or girl to a training school.

A training school is ordinarily a State institution. In essence and at its best, it represents our most comprehensive—and most expensive—effort to help a young person understand himself and the part he must play if he wants to be accepted in normal social life. Generally, too, an attempt is made to give the older juveniles in these schools some kind of vocational training that will permit them to find a job and become economically independent. However, the first purpose is the primary one.

More often than not these schools are equipped to accept only the "ordinary" type of delinquent child—not the child with an extreme type of behavior disorder. Ideally, therefore, a boy or girl should be

sent to a training school only after careful study, and only after the judge is sure that the treatment offered by the school will answer the child's need at that particular time better than anything else available.

But these ideal conditions rarely exist. And in reality the situation is far different from what it should be.

### *The training school as a "catch-all"*

At the present time most of the delinquent boys and girls in our training schools were sent there as a last resort. Juvenile court judges are being *forced* to send children to these schools—without regard for their needs—simply because of the lack of probation service, of clinical facilities, and of other such resources in our communities. It's a great deal less expensive to keep a child in the community and provide good probation service than it is to support him in an institution, but we persist in the less economical way.

Sometimes judges have to take this recourse because of strong community sentiment against a particular boy or girl. Public alarm about certain types of sex offenders and about fire-setters, for example, may



be so great that the child has to be gotten out of the community even though he might better be treated right there at home.

Because of this indiscriminate way of assigning children to training schools, they get a lot of children they can't really help very much. For example, delinquent children with particular mental and physical handicaps are being sent to these schools. Their handicaps are often part of the cause of their delinquent behavior. These children may need institutional treatment but not that kind given by a training school for delinquent children in general. In fact, these children with special disabilities simply disrupt the program offered in the ordinary training school. What these children most likely need is a special institution or special treatment facilities.

With all these boys and girls being sent to training schools for the *wrong* reasons, it is not surprising that many of the schools are unable to give the personalized and individual treatment that the children need.

In addition, a good many of the schools are overcrowded. They get *too many* children.

The population of some of these schools exceeds 400 children. The maximum for good working conditions is just about half this number. As soon as a training school population gets too large, it is difficult for the staff to avoid using mass regimentation methods and discipline. When there are too many children, it becomes a problem just to maintain order. There is little opportunity to keep up a good treatment program.

Confronted as they are with all these difficulties, it is not surprising that the schools do suffer a large number of "failures"—children who fail to readjust satisfactorily when they get into the outside world and who are sent back to the same institution or to another institution. Of course, whether these children are the schools' failures or society's failures, it would be hard to say. The schools are usually pitted against failure to begin with. They receive the children for whom everything else has failed.

In fact, it is the training schools that most often face the "hard core" cases of juvenile delinquency. Many of the boys and girls in these schools are children who have been in the school before, or have failed on probation from the juvenile court.

These children need very special and intensive treatment if they are to be stopped at this stage of their life from continuing in a career of delinquent behavior. At the present time many of our State training

schools are not prepared to give this treatment.

How, then, are we to achieve *success* in the place of *failure*? Evidently there can be no sure answer to this question. But the experience of the *good* training schools in the country proves to us that there are things a training school *can* do in the way of treatment that will give us considerably more success than we are getting now. The essentials for such success: a good program, a trained staff working with good equipment, and a sound policy of aftercare.

*Program: To re-educate,  
not to punish*

Delinquents who come to training schools, it must be remembered, are those young people who have not yet learned to abide by society's rules. The causes behind their inability to conform are many and complex. These are children who have been deprived in one way or another of things they vitally need—of emotional stability and control, of social acceptance and opportunity, and sometimes even of physical nourishment and care. Their delinquencies have often arisen from the failure of their homes and communities to supply these fundamental needs.

If the training school is to help these children learn to adjust their personal desires to the demands of the group, it must try to make up to them for some of the deprivations they have endured. Each boy or girl should be judged and treated in accordance with his or her personal need. Obviously mass regimentation, rigid discipline, and blanket rules of punishment show little regard for the individual. The training school must not be an institution for punishment.

Instead of being primarily a place of confinement, a training school for delinquents should be what its name implies—an educational institution in the broadest sense.

Its primary purpose is to prepare boys and girls for successful living in their homes and communities. To achieve this purpose the school must help each child understand his problems—why he misbehaves and what this misbehavior means to other people—and how he can solve them. At the same time a boy or girl has to have a chance to express himself and to grow. By the time they reach the training school, most of these youngsters have a deep and troubling feeling that they will never be any good. Usually a lot of bad experiences have given them this feeling. It's the job of the training school to show them that everyone

has his own merits and that these individual values all add up to the common good.

Along with personal counseling, the training school has to offer a vigorous program of activities that will keep young minds and bodies constructively occupied. Most of these children were behind in public school at the time they got in trouble. Special educational procedures and techniques are therefore usually necessary to help them with poor reading habits, with speech difficulties, and the like. A good opportunity is presented, also, to give them some vocational training so that the older boys and girls will become economically useful and independent. In some of our better training schools such enterprises as machine shops, printing shops, dairy farms, auto mechanics shops, and home-making courses are geared to helping young people prepare themselves for life.

Finally, a good training school considers the need for a well-rounded home and community life. For example, it may arrange for the children to live in cottages with a house mother and father and with small groups of children similar in age and interests. Although this cottage life can never be a satisfactory substitute for family life, it can give the children some of the values of home life, which many of them have never known. It can teach them orderly habits of social living. And it can give them contact with understanding adults, who accept them and whom they can accept. For some delinquent children the greatest benefit of cottage life lies in the security and recognition they may find in their relationship with cottage parents.

Of course the school is itself a small community. But a good program will provide, in addition, that the children have contact with community life outside the boundaries of the school. To accomplish this the school will usually have to gain the good will of the people in nearby communities so that they will learn to accept the children and even participate in the training school program.

In a number of training schools a system of sponsorship has been developed, in which people in the community "adopt" a boy in the training school. The sponsor visits the boy at frequent intervals, has him as a guest in his home, and generally makes him feel his affection and concern for him. This kind of close contact can help a boy or girl immeasurably.

In fact, a good personal relationship seems to have the profoundest effect on these children. And it is for this reason above all that the staff of the school should be well trained and well qualified for their jobs.

### *Quality of personnel*

Some of our institutions for delinquent children look grim and prison-like but still manage to conduct a successful program. Their success is due primarily to their staff.

No aspect of the institutional program is so important as the quality of its personnel. The appearance of the grounds and buildings should be attractive and pleasant, but they alone do not make a good institution. Despite the most modern architecture and the best of shining equipment, the children will profit little from their institutional experience if the staff regards them merely as charges to be supplied with shelter, regular meals, and clean linen—or as “bad” boys and girls who must be taught obedience through fear of punishment.

Cottage parents, teachers, administrators, and other staff members in a training school need to be mature in their attitudes. They should be able to control any inclination they may have of dominating children by the authority of their position. Only as these people are sensitive to the needs of children and respect their personalities is there possibility of giving permanent help to the children. The working staff of the training school must therefore be men and women of well integrated personalities, who have a genuine fondness for children and who have the education and training to be able to understand and treat deviant behavior.

Of course this staff will need a great deal of expert help. Ideally every school should have a psychiatrist to help to identify and treat the individualized needs of children. A lot of them do have one. Other training schools are conveniently located near cities where they can obtain the part-time services of a psychiatrist. In any case, it is very important that the head of the treatment program be a person who can guide the entire staff so that they will all give their best efforts toward the single purpose of helping each child.

### *Care after leaving the school*

The training school that has “treated” one of its children with apparent success cannot afford to let that boy or girl return to his home community without providing some kind of aftercare. That aftercare must commence the moment he returns to his home or com-



munity. Studies of children who have gotten into trouble again after leaving a training school show that most of them "fail" within the first three months of release. The percentage is largest for the first months and then gradually tapers down.

The fact that a child may often "fail" when he gets back home even though he seemed to be doing fine at the school is not too difficult to understand. Many children in training schools are afraid of returning to the home community. They talk about being "in disgrace" and of the cold reception they'll get from everyone they know. And of course it's true that the adverse sentiment in the community that was there when the child went away may easily revive when he returns home. In fact, all too often a child is released from a training school to return to the very conditions that gave rise to his delinquency. Without continued guidance and help he may again fall prey to the same destructive forces.

To make its treatment lasting in its effect, therefore, the training school must work out some system to prepare the child for his return home and to give him aftercare in adjusting to his new situation. This aftercare should be given by a trained social worker—either from the training school itself or from a State or local agency.

The aftercare should be given in full measure. Studies of children who have "failed" show that in some of our States aftercare ceases automatically after a stated period of time. In some cases, as a result of this technical restriction, aftercare workers have been known to have stopped seeing children just at a time when they needed attention the most.

One final requirement—and not the least—is that the community itself must receive with good grace those boys and girls who have been in training schools. The community is both the starting place and the ending place. If we are willing to assume the responsibility of improving services for these youngsters so that they can reestablish themselves as useful members of society, then we must be willing to welcome them into our society and find a place for them when they return to us.

And even more important, perhaps, we must wipe out those conditions that gave rise to their delinquency in the first place.

## **PREVENTING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

If we act now, we may be able to prevent a good deal of the threatened increase in juvenile delinquency during the next few years. But we'll have to act with foresight and determination.

Here's the situation: The number of American children under the age of 18 is going to reach the startling figure of *55 and a half million* by the year 1960. This is an increase of *8 and a half million* children over 1950—a great harvest for the Nation. How big a harvest it is can be seen from the fact that these 8 and a half million *additional* children just about equal the entire population of the New England States!

What can we do to keep all these children out of trouble? we ask ourselves.

Or an even better question we might ask is: What can we do to give these youngsters a good, healthy early life that will help them grow up to be mature and responsible adults?

These two questions are closely tied together.

Experience with young people who have gotten into trouble with the law has taught us a lot about *why* children become delinquent. The people who work with delinquent boys and girls have never been able to find any *one* cause for their *all* becoming delinquent. But they have been able to single out certain conditions that crop up, either alone or in combination, in the lives of the majority of delinquent children. Bad relationships with parents, slum environment, broken home life, economic insecurity—these are some of the conditions that seem to be at the root of delinquent behavior. They are all part of the fabric of the *home and community life* of known delinquent children.

Children who are neglected or unwanted in their early years often never learn to feel respect and affection for other people.. And the youngster who starts out in life with a social or economic handicap—like being discriminated against, for instance, or being born on “the wrong side of the tracks”—may easily come to feel unfairly treated and

hemmed in, with little or no hope of getting ahead in life. Both types are full of distrust and resentment.

Such children have to take out their feelings in some way. Quite often it is by antisocial behavior. Sometimes this is secret, as in stealing. Sometimes it is open and violent, as in destruction of property or even by assault upon other people.

The best way to go about preventing juvenile delinquency, then—and a host of other social ills, for that matter—is to make home and community life so attractive and satisfying to children that they will be practically immune to becoming delinquent. In other words, by making our homes and communities *better* places in which to live, we make them *poor* places for delinquency.

How do we go about this?

*Healthy roots make  
healthy plants*

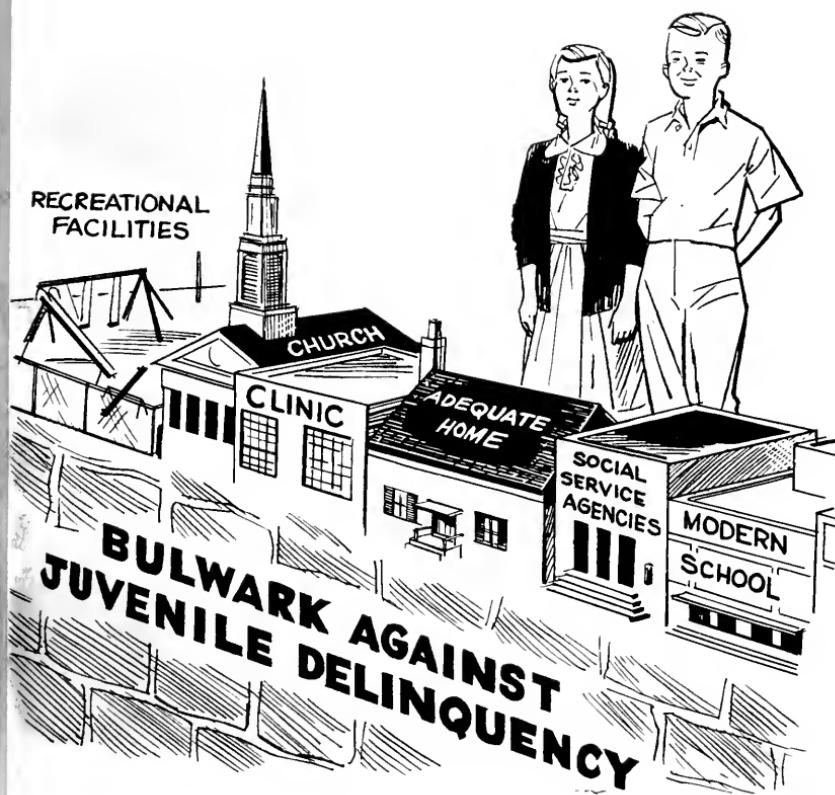
The roots of each person's way of life sink deep and extend far in every direction. Cared for, in enriched soil, these roots make healthy plants. Untended, in soil barren and neglected, they wither or grow weak and twisted.

In 1950 the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth met in Washington for the very purpose of finding out what we can do to ensure that the roots of our children's lives will be healthy and productive. That conference brought together the leading experts on child development from all parts of America. The purpose of the conference, it was said, was ". . . to consider how we can develop in children the mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and to responsible citizenship, and what physical, economic, and social conditions are deemed necessary to this development. . . ."

The specific recommendations made by the fact-finding groups and by the Conference in answer to this stated purpose are too numerous and detailed to be given here.<sup>1</sup> But these recommendations can be

---

<sup>1</sup> See *A Healthy Personality for Every Child*, the digest of the fact-finding report to the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, published by Health Publications Institute, Inc., Raleigh, N. C., 1951. See also *Understanding Juvenile Delinquency*, Publication No. 300, rev. ed., 1949, Children's Bureau, Federal Security Agency, Washington 25, D. C.



summarized in the form of a number of broad goals toward which we can all work. These goals are to:

1. Allow no family or child to suffer from want because of economic insecurity.
2. Help parents to understand and care for their children better.
3. See to it that children are not brought up in slums and in over-crowded, impoverished homes.

4. Provide good teachers and school programs that answer the individual needs of children.
5. Give children space to play in and recreation programs that will help them make good use of their leisure time.
6. Provide health services that will reach children before they are sick and that will keep them well and make them strong in body and personality.
7. Teach children to live according to a reasonable moral code that will make their relationship to other people helpful and honest.
8. Protect children from bad influences in the community that might try to exploit them.

Perhaps not every means by which we can make life full and satisfying for our children is listed here. But those that are listed are all very important. Some of them may require action in our communities—some, action at the State level, while still others may require National action. In any case, they are goals that we should seek to attain by any and every means and, once we have them, to *maintain* them. They offer the truest way of preventing the largest number of our young people from becoming delinquent.

#### *Early maladjustment can be remedied*

There are also other things we can do to help prevent delinquency. Along with our efforts to make the community a better place in which to live—and thus a poor place for the development of delinquency—we can carry on a program of prevention aimed at helping children who have developed problems. This might be called *remedial prevention*. It is a very important part of any community program to combat juvenile delinquency. And, since early maladjustment often leads to personal and social disorders other than delinquency, this remedial prevention may serve to stem the development of a number of ills.

*Discovery* is the first part of the remedial program. The earlier the child with a problem is discovered, the better chance there is of helping him.

Children start developing problems and becoming delinquent much earlier than many of us realize. A recent study of 500 delinquent boys by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck brought out the fact that the largest number of them first appeared in court when they were between 11 and

3 years of age. However, *nine-tenths* of these children were having difficulty in making personal and social adjustment *before they were 11 years old*. And almost *one-half* of them showed signs of becoming delinquent *before they were 8*—or even younger! We have to learn to detect signs of maladjustment in children while they are still very young.

A degree of caution is necessary in discovering maladjusted children. Not every boy or girl who misbehaves, for example, is maladjusted. It may be the simple misbehavior common to his or her age. All children misbehave at one time or another. If the misbehavior of a boy or girl becomes chronic and habitual, however, it may very well be a sign of maladjustment. People come to recognize these signs more easily the better they know and understand children. Misbehavior is not the only sign of maladjustment. Sometimes acute shyness, chronic nailbiting, or even physical symptoms are danger signals. It is the task of those who are in close daily contact with young people—parents, teachers, church and recreation leaders, for example—to develop this ability of recognizing when a child is being troubled.

The second part of the remedial program is *referral to a resource* in the community. There has to be someone or some agency that the boy or girl can be sent to for help.

Most communities do offer their citizens some kind of remedial service through various types of health, welfare, educational, and religious agencies—under either public or private sponsorship. Children should be shown special consideration in these health and welfare services. Certain agencies can play a very effective role in helping a child with problems and preventing him from going on to more serious maladjustment.

Depending upon what his problem is, a child might need the attention of a *social worker*, for example. This could be the public child welfare worker or the school social worker. Or it could be a caseworker in a voluntary *social agency for families or for children*.

Another child might need to see the psychiatrist or another staff member of a *child guidance clinic* or *mental hygiene clinic*.

Still another boy or girl might best be referred to a *trained group leader* in a neighborhood club or playground.

These are some of the more important social resources in a community that are valuable in helping children with problems. They are basic resources. Every community needs to have them accessible.

### *Reaching the "hidden delinquents"*

In addition to treating boys and girls who are just beginning to develop problems, these community social services can also play an important part in reaching our "hidden delinquents."

Many of us know of youngsters who have misbehaved just as seriously as a lot of children who are brought to the juvenile court. They too, have stolen something, destroyed property, perhaps, or committed some other act forbidden by law. Yet they have managed to avoid coming to the official notice of the police.

In one large eastern city a survey of the case records of social agencies revealed that at least *one-third* of the boys and girls who spoke of their delinquent behavior were *unknown to the police*.

Many of these boys and girls escape official notice through sheer luck. Or, as is very often the case, their parents or influential friends are able to protect them.

How many of these hidden delinquents there are we do not know. As indicated above, many of them do come to the attention of public and private social agencies. Others are sent to private clinics or to private schools, when their parents can afford such treatment. But undoubtedly a great many are presently going without treatment—either because of the complete lack or inadequacy of resources or because parents or the children themselves do not want treatment or do not know it is available.

We cannot pass these children over lightly. Both for their own sake and for that of the community, it is important that they be discovered and given treatment at as early an age as possible.

# **ORGANIZING OUR SERVICES TO TREAT AND PREVENT DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR**

Just a glance back at these two parts of the *prevention* program to combat juvenile delinquency will reveal how closely related they are to the *treatment* program outlined in the preceding chapter.

Prevention makes treatment less often necessary. When treatment does become necessary, the same agencies that work for prevention can also aid in treating a child. Treatment in turn becomes an important form of prevention. The delinquent who is given proper treatment while he is still a juvenile may be prevented from becoming an adult criminal. An improvement in either area—prevention or treatment—nearly always contributes to the other.

For example, a rural community may be able to answer a number of its needs by obtaining the services of a public child welfare worker. These workers ordinarily contribute to the prevention of delinquency. They may offer parents guidance in child-rearing; they investigate reports of children who are being neglected or abused; and they help families and children with problems. There is also a specific treatment function related to known delinquency that these workers can perform: Rural communities often have need of a trained social worker to give individual attention and care to the occasional delinquent boy or girl who might best be kept in the community for treatment. This is the job of a probation officer. The demand for such service in a rural area is rarely sufficient, however, for a full-time probation officer to be hired. In such a case as this, therefore, the public child welfare worker could act as probation officer for the community's juvenile court.

Similarly, in a larger community, a mental health clinic or child guidance clinic may be able to serve in several ways. It could, for instance, conduct discussion groups for parents in child-rearing. This is true prevention. It could also accept cases of boys or girls who are beginning to have personality problems. This is the so-called remedial prevention. And finally, the clinic could offer both diagnostic service and treatment

service to the local juvenile court. Thus a well-developed clinic in this sort contributes to prevention and treatment.

The very fact that the agencies involved in treatment and prevention are so closely related, however, makes for certain problems. The agencies are many and varied. Some are public in nature, others voluntary. The police, juvenile court, detention home, health clinic, child placement and adoption agency, training school, family or children's social service agency, public school, recreation agency, and so on, all play a role in a community's program to control juvenile delinquency.

None of these agencies can exist in isolation—and do an effective job. Nearly all of them overlap to some extent in the service they give. They are part of a total program. The success of one hinges upon the success of another. When one fails, all others have a far more difficult time. For this reason, our social services for children must be closely and carefully organized and coordinated.

*Lack of coordination and organization brings failure and costly error*

Without proper coordination of services, children may be shuttled from one agency to another. The needs of certain children may be overlooked. Services are often spread too thin. Or there are gaps between agencies. Sometimes there are weaknesses at an early stage of service that increase the burden at a later stage.

For example, when there is no one in a community to give probation care or when the service that exists is inadequate for the need, the juvenile court judge is forced to send children to training schools which might really be better off staying at home. Many rural children suffer such a fate because of this reason.

Also, when there are not enough foster homes in a community to give temporary shelter, the court is often forced to send a child to a secure-custody type of shelter even though the child really needs ordinary foster care.

Similarly, when there is no clinic in the community to diagnose children's troubles and help with treatment, a whole chain of bad consequences follows. No one may bother about a child until he gets in serious trouble. And even then, when he comes before the juvenile court, the judge—because of the lack of diagnostic service—may not be able to tell what is troubling the child and how he can best be helped.

These are just a few of the failings that can and do happen on the

cal level. The State services are also related, both to each other and to those of the community. Lack of organization on the State level can be just as destructive as it is on the local level.

State-operated training schools, for instance, often depend upon local probation officers or workers of other agencies to give aftercare to boys and girls released from the schools. Even if the treatment program at the schools is excellent, the children may quickly become delinquent again if the local aftercare services are poor in quality or limited in extent.

And, as another example, good statewide probation services face great difficulties when local resources—clinics, specialized recreation programs, and the like—are insufficient.

Geography lends another disquieting aspect to this lack of organization on the State level. A child in one county, for example, may receive excellent attention right there at home—from the police, juvenile court, clinic, probation officer, and so on. But right next door in the adjoining county, just a few miles away, a boy or girl with exactly the same difficulties and needs may be treated like an adult criminal and may be immediately shipped off to an overcrowded training school.

In other words, what citizens will find in many communities and states is not organization, but *disorganization*. This in spite of the fact that time and time again, as the case histories of numerous delinquent children tell us, the good work of one agency is lost and negated by the failure of the next agency in the treatment program to continue this good work. Evidently in every community and State coherent organization of services for delinquent children—and for children in general—is needed. The path of rehabilitation must be cut deep and must be well marked.

### *Organizing for complete and effective care*

A considerable number of communities and a small number of States have already undertaken to organize their services. In most cases they work toward helping not only delinquent children but also children in general.

At the local level the task of organization is one of obtaining services and coordinating them. In many places citizens have formed a community council or some other such group to lead the drive for getting



required services. Such a council is an effective instrument for finding out what a community needs and for working out ways to supply those needs. Its interest may run from devising ways and means of clearing a slum to simply getting a new basketball court for recreational purposes.

Once services are available, whether they are official or voluntary, they have to be coordinated. This is bringing them together in cooperative relationship so that each will know what the other is doing and so that there will be neither gaps nor unnecessary duplication of service.

In larger communities a community council or a council of social agencies may often assume the responsibility for this coordination. In smaller communities there may be fewer agencies and people involved, but the need for coordination will be as great. Whatever the name or form of the coordinating group, the police officer, juvenile court judge, social worker, recreation leader, and other representatives of youth-serving organizations in a community should have some means of getting together.

The delinquency problem is, of course, basically a community problem. Both the cause and the cure are the community's responsibility. However, communities often need help from the State. And in some cases communities are hindered in their efforts to help delinquent children by the lack of proper State organization.

There are several reasons why a citizen group may have to look beyond its own community for help in solving the delinquency problem.

For instance, many communities are too poor to provide services. They need services but cannot afford them. Here it may be necessary for the State to pitch in and help.

As another reason, rural communities also have only *limited need* for services. A separate detention home or a full-time probation officer would be a costly burden to them. State organization of regional detention homes and statewide probation service may be the only solution to the difficulties of these rural areas.

In some States many communities find themselves saddled with a weak and inadequate juvenile court simply because of the poor system established by State law. Revision of the law may be the best way of getting better juvenile court service at the local level.

And, as previously pointed out, local services often depend directly upon State services, and vice versa. Juvenile courts are dependent upon State training schools, for example, and State training schools rely sometimes upon local probation officers or social workers to give aftercare.

It is clear from these examples, then, that the State and its communities are closely dependent upon each other in this campaign to control juvenile delinquency. There has to be organization at the state level to make cooperation possible and effective.

#### *Some state plans*

In recent years several States have taken action to improve services for delinquent children through better organization. The essential idea behind most such State plans has been that the services discussed in this pamphlet and other such services to delinquent children have been made the responsibility of a single State agency.

The work of the particular agency responsible for these services varies from State to State, depending on how much support it receives and how far advanced in development of program it may be. In at least one State the agency gives the following kinds of service for delinquent children.

1. It maintains reception centers for diagnosis of the treatment needs of delinquent children. It also maintains and operates several types of training institutions, varied in accordance with these needs.
2. It furnishes consultation service on juvenile police work, detention, and probation to any community in the State that requests it.

3. It has the authority to give communities financial assistance in constructing a detention facility. It helps rural areas organize regional detention facilities.
4. It subsidizes forestry camps and other such facilities that are conducted by local authorities for group treatment of delinquent children.
5. It develops standards governing the various types of service for delinquent children.
6. It makes community surveys and helps communities with planning for prevention of delinquency, when requested to do so.
7. It compiles statistics on the occurrence and causation of delinquency and on the characteristics of the training school population.
8. It conducts and encourages research.

Few States have organized their services for delinquent children to the extent, but a number have commenced organization, usually of those services most in need.

One small State, for example, has established its juvenile court system



a regional basis, as well as its probation service. Better service at greater economy has thus been achieved.

All the States take advantage of the Federal program that grants funds for child welfare work in rural areas and areas of special need. With these funds the States are able to provide public child welfare services in many localities. As was previously suggested as a possibility, in some of the States these child welfare workers also give probation service for juvenile courts.

These are but a few examples of ways in which States can and do aid communities. State leadership may be the answer to many a community's delinquency problem.

### *Citizen Responsibility*

In any case, no matter what the plan of organization may be or where the leadership may come from—the State or the community—one thing is certain: We have to provide more services for children, particularly delinquent children, and we have to organize them well.

This is a great challenge: 55 and a half million children by 1960, 8 ad a half million more than in 1950. Their needs must be met if we want them to turn out all right. Otherwise they might get in trouble—within themselves or with the law.

A lot of children are already getting into trouble. We can help these children now—by bettering our social services for them. We need more trained juvenile police officers, better staffed juvenile courts, suitable detention facilities, more treatment resources within the community, and better staffed and equipped training schools.

This task of helping delinquent children and preventing other children from becoming delinquent is not a job that can be carried out by one official or by one agency. It's the job of every citizen. We vote. We pay taxes. Through our public officials, our newspapers, and magazines, we can make our wishes known. When we know what we want for children, we can get it.

One of the things we've got to do immediately is look around us and *find out* about the children in our communities. Where do they live? What kind of schools do they go to? What do they do in their leisure time? How many of them get into trouble with the law? What happens to those who do? What social services are provided for them?

What are the answers to these questions in *your* community?

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1953

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office  
Washington 25, D. C. - Price 15 cents

**Children's Bureau Publication No. 341**

**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE**

**Social Security Administration**

**Children's Bureau**

**1953**

